

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ATHENS 07373 091711Z

62

ACTION EUR-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 7373

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GR

SUBJECT: ELECTION CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED ON TEMPERATE NOTE

1. SUMMARY: PM CARAMANLIS IN BRIEF MESSAGE TO NATION (ATHENS 7259) OPENED ELECTION CAMPAIGN WITH STRESS ON RESPONSIBILITY AND MATURITY. AS POLITICAL PARTIES, PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES, AND ELECTORAL MACHINERY MOVE INTO ACTION, GREEK PUBLIC APPEARS COMPOSED AND SOBER-MINDED. CARAMANLIS AND HIS "NEW DEMOCRACY" ARE WIDELY FAVORED TO WIN BALLOTING, BUT EXTENT OF SUPPORT THEY DRAW WILL DEPEND ON VARIOUS NOW UNPREDICTABLE FACTORS SUCH AS CYPRUS DEVELOPMENTS, CANDIDATES OF EACH PARTY, RELATIVE POLLING STRENGTHS OF NEW ALIGNMENTS, AND UNDERLYING ISSUES OF MONARCHY, DEJUNTIZATION, WITHDRAWAL FROM NATO, REBUILDING ARMED FORCES AND ANTI-AMERICANISM. END SUMMARY.

2. PRIME MINISTER'S STATESMANLIKE ADDRESS TO NATION OCT. 3 SET SERIOUS TONE IN LAUNCHING NATION'S FIRST POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IN MORE THAN TEN YEARS. ATMOSPHERE SO FAR, WITH NO POSTERS AND NO RALLIES, REFLECTS BUSINESS-AS-USUAL AS IF PUBLIC STILL HAS NOT QUITE ADJUSTED TO REALITY OF GOING TO POLLS NEXT MONTH AFTER LONG HIATUS IMPOSED BY MILITARY REGIME. SLOW START FOR CAMPAIGN PER SE, DESPITE GREEK PENCHANT FOR POLITICS, APPEARS MAINLY TO RESULT FROM CONTINUING PROBLEMS BOTH IN DELINEATING POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS AND IN SELECTING INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES.

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PAGE 02 ATHENS 07373 091711Z

3. NEXT STEP WILL BE ANNOUNCEMENT BY POLITICAL PARTIES OF CANDIDATES FOR PARLIAMENT'S 300 SEATS. SUCH LISTS ARE NOW IN PREPARATION. REPORTEDLY CARAMANLIS HAS DROPPED 40 OR MORE FORMER DEPUTIES INCLUDING JUNTA COLLABORATORS AND "CONVERSANTS" (THOSE WHO MET WITH PM PAPADOPOULOS), SOME OLDER MP'S AND SOME WHOSE LOYALTIES HE APPARENTLY CONSIDERS SUSPECT. THIS WILL PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW "ELEMENTS" (THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY "NEW FACES"), INCLUDING "PROGRESSIVE" FORCES TO SUPPORT CARAMANLIS' "NEW DEMOCRACY." WHILE MANY GREEKS NOW FORECAST MOVEMENT OF POLITICAL SPECTRUM TO LEFT, PM HAS CAREFULLY AVOIDED ATTACHING ANY DESCRIPTIVE LABEL TO HIS MOVEMENT. WHATEVER EVENTUAL ALIGNMENTS OF CANDIDATES MAY EMERGE, CARAMANLIS' OWN APPEAL TO GREEK VOTER IS STRONG, AND PRAGMATIC DESIRE OF CANDIDATES AND VOTERS TO BE ON WINNING SIDE, AT LEAST UNTIL NORMAL PARLIAMENTARY PATTERN RESTORED, SHOULD COMBINE TO PRODUCE VICTORY FOR "NEW DEMOCRACY."

4. EARLY FORECASTS OF ELECTION RESULTS VARY WIDELY WITH CENTER UNION ANTICIPATING A "NEW DEMOCRACY" VICTORY OF 40-45 O/O WHILE CARAMANLIS' ADVOCATES OPTIMISTICALLY FORESEE SCORING WELL OVER 50 O/O OF ELECTORATE. FROM ONE SEASONED DIPLOMAT RESIDENT HERE FOR NEARLY 15 YEARS WE HAVE HEARD PREDICTION THAT CARAMANLIS' PARTY LIKELY TO REGISTER VICTORY OF 180 SEATS. OTHERS PREDICT SLIGHTLY REDUCED MARGIN FOR CARAMANLIS WITH APPROXIMATE OUTCOME-- NEW DEMOCRACY 170, CENTER UNION 75, PAPANDREOU'S PASOK 20 AND EDA/KKE 35. URBAN VOTE TRADITIONALLY MORE TO LEFT SEEMS LIKELY TO PRODUCE HIGHEST YIELDS FOR EDA/KKE AND PASOK (ATHENS IN LAST LOCAL ELECTIONS, 1964, VOTED 30 O/O FOR EDA), AND YOUTH RADICALIZED BY REACTION TO JUNTA MAY ALSO SHOW SWING TO LEFT, ALTHOUGH STILL PROBLEMATIC HOW MANY NEW VOTERS WILL HAVE COMPLETED RELATIVELY COMPLICATED REGISTRATION PROCESS ENABLING THEM TO PARTICIPATE. VILLAGES WILL CONSTITUTE TRADITIONAL STRENGTH FOR CENTER AND CARAMANLIS. IT IS STILL UNKNOWN WHETHER KANELLOPOULOS WILL SUPPORT CARAMANLIS OR CU, BOTH OF WHOM HAVE BEEN COURTING HIM ASSIDUOUSLY. CIVIL SERVANTS AND ARMED FORCES ARE EXPECTED TO VOTE OVERWHELMINGLY FOR CARAMANLIS, AS WILL YOUNG MEN STILL MOBILIZED AS RESULT OF JULY CALLUP.

5. LABOR SECTOR, WHICH IN PAST HAS FAIRLY CLOSELY REFLECTED NATIONAL PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWNS, IS LESS PREDICTABLE NOW DUE TO CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ATHENS 07373 091711Z

RECENT CHANGES OF SWEEPING NATURE (ATHENS 6805) WHEREBY ADMINISTRATIONS OF ALL LABOR CONFEDERATIONS, FEDERATIONS, AND LABOR CENTERS WERE REPLACED EN MASSE WITH COURT-APPOINTED TEMPORARY OFFICIALS. IN TIME REMAINING BEFORE ELECTIONS, ELECTORAL ALLEGIANCE OF NATION'S WORKERS COULD PROVOKE THREE-WAY TUG-OF-WAR BETWEEN (A) WELL ORGANIZED LEFTIST ELEMENTS HISTORICALLY INTERESTED IN ACHIEVING INFLUENCE IN SYNDICALISTIC MOVEMENT (B) CARAMANLIS FORCES OPERATING SUBTLY THROUGH "NEUTRAL" TEMPORARY

ADMINISTRATIONS AND (C) NATIONALIST FORCES CENTERED ABOUT GAROUFALIAS PARTY WHICH IS ALREADY BEGINNING TO OPERATE AS MAGNET FOR LABOR LEADERS TOSSED OUT SO PEREMPTORILY BY CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT.

6. OLD ESTABLISHMENT AND ROYALISTS WILL SUPPORT CARAMANLIS AS MAY CERTAIN RIGHTISTS, SOME OF WHOM CONTINUE TO PROFESS UPPORT FOR APRIL 21 REVOLUTION. OTHERS IN THIS CATEGORY MAY PREFER TO THROW THEIR SUPPORT TO SEPARATE, MORE DISTINCTLY RIGHTIST-MONARCHIST GROUP, WHOSE ORGANIZATION UNDER FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER GAROUFALIAS HAS JUST BEEN ANNOUNCED. GAROUFALIAS GROUPING APPARENTLY IS EXERCISING CERTAIN ATTRACTION FOR FORMER MAYORS AND COMMUNITY PRESIDENTS WHO HELD OFFICE UNDER JUNTA BUT WHO WERE SUMMARILY DISMISSED FEW WEEKS AGO (ATHENS 6752). IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SOME MAY STILL HAVE SIGNIFICANT FOLLOWING, EXPECIALLY IN COUNTRYSIDE, WHERE THERE SUCCESS IN ACHIEVING LOCAL PROGRESS MAY OUTBALANCE FACT THAT JUNTA PUT THEM IN OFFICE. APPARENTLY FORMER PM MARKEZINIS AND HIS SMALL GROUP OF ADHERENTS HAVE DECIDED THAT ELECTORAL SYSTEM EXCLUDES ANY CHANCE FOR SMALL PARTIES AND HAVE COUNTED THEMSELVES OUT.

6. AS ELECTION DATE APPROACHES AND IF CARAMANLIS RETAINS IMAGE AS UNIFYING LEADER AND ADEPT PROBLEM SOLVER, MULTIPLIER EFFECT MAY BOOST CARAMANLIS' VICTORY TO UNPRECEDENTED HEIGHTS. (ANYTHING OVER 50 O/O OF POPULAR VOTE WOULD BE SMASHING VICTORY.) AT PRESENT WITH ISSUES OF CARETAKER GOVERNMENT, MARTIAL LAW, CANDIDATES FOR DEPUTIES, AND FINAL POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS INCLUDING STICKY QUESTION OF APOSTATES STILL NOT FULLY RESOLVED, FORECASTING IS AT BEST CHANCY. IT IS PERHAPS WORTH RECALLING CARAMANLIS' CHALLENGE TO GREEK ELECTORATE ON OCTOBER 3 THAT MANDATE TO MANAGE NATION'S AFFAIRS IS NOW PASSED TO PEOPLE UPON WHOSE DECISION AT THE POLLS THIS TIME THE BASIC SURVIVAL OF DEMOCRACY IN GREECE DEPENDS.

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PAGE 04 ATHENS 07373 091711Z

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